

Testimony in OPPOSITION of
House Bill 282: Sexually Explicit Materials – Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers

Ways and Means Committee

Position: Oppose

January 23, 2025

Strong Schools Maryland envisions a future in which Maryland leads the nation in high-quality, equitable education practices and policies. **House Bill 282** validates nationwide political efforts aiming to delegitimize public schools by prohibiting “sexually explicit” materials in public school libraries and media centers. In Maryland currently, School Library Media Specialists (SLMS) are responsible for curating a collection of materials, books, and media in public school libraries. Each year, all public schools are required to complete the School Library Media Annual Survey to provide information about each school’s library media program, collection, budget, and staffing. SLMS are professionals dedicated to curating a collection of books that inspires critical thinking and represents/reflects *all* students in the classroom¹.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future envisions a system where public school administrators’ and teachers’ intents and informed decisions are respected and valued, not questioned and attacked. Passing this bill would indicate to the public that the Maryland government lacks trust or respect for the public school system and those who work in public schools, eroding hope for a vision that the Blueprint had for our public schools in Maryland.

House Bill 282 acts in tandem with larger national efforts to diminish the quality of education and weaken the trust between schools and families through book bans that disproportionately prohibit media that centers Black, Brown, and LGBTQ characters². The restrictive nature of these forms of covert censorship legislation have resulted in severely limited access to books for many students. Representation in school libraries is important to students as it helps to promote a sense of belonging, increases student engagement, and fosters critical thinking skills³. Furthermore, the bill mischaracterizes materials available in schools as being age inappropriate, undermining the expertise of school staff who have foundational knowledge, pedagogy, and training to ensure media is best-suited for students⁴.

It is the responsibility of the Maryland General Assembly to advance legislation that upholds an equitable, progressive, and transformative public education system – this proposed legislation would set a dangerous precedent in the erosion of our trust in and quality of Maryland public schools.

For these reasons, we strongly urge an unfavorable report on House Bill 282.

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

¹ [Public School Annual Library Media Report 2023-24](#)

² [Education Week](#)

³ [Rigor and Representation in Children’s Books Foster a Love of Reading. 2024](#)

⁴ [National Education Association](#)